



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DECEMBER 11, 2003

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
MARVIN SMILON, HERBERT HADAD,
MICHAEL KULSTAD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600

**EX-COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR MULTI-
MILLION DOLLAR EMBEZZLEMENT SCHEME**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that VERONICA BOWES, a former senior cashier in the Student Financial Services Office of Columbia University, was sentenced late yesterday to five years and three months in prison in connection with her participation in a scheme to steal approximately \$4.5 million from Columbia University's account at JPMorgan Chase Bank ("Chase").

On July 29, 2003, after a week-long trial, BOWES was found guilty of bank fraud and conspiring to commit bank fraud and bank embezzlement by a jury in Manhattan federal court.

The charges resulted from BOWES' participation, together with another former Columbia employee, Ingrid Rijos, and a former Chase employee, Jacqueline McTair, in a scheme, from September 1998 through February 2002, to steal checks that were intended for deposit into Columbia's account at Chase.

United States District Judge RICHARD M. BERMAN, in addition to BOWES' jail sentence, imposed a restitution order of approximately \$4.5 million dollars.

On December 5, 2003, Judge BERMAN sentenced BOWES' codefendant, Ingrid Rijos, to 33 months in prison and imposed a restitution order of approximately \$4.5 million dollars. Rijos had pled guilty to participating in the charged conspiracy and to a separate embezzlement charge.

Another codefendant, Jacqueline McTair, a former Chase employee, was sentenced by United States District Judge MICHAEL B. MUKASEY to five years and six months in prison on November 13, 2003. McTair was also required to pay a restitution order of approximately \$4.5 million.

The evidence at trial established that BOWES, a long-time employee in Columbia's Student Financial Services Office, was responsible for receiving funds from students and Columbia's various departments, delivering check deposits of more than \$100,000 to Chase daily for deposit into Columbia's Chase account, and documenting these daily deposits in internal records submitted to the Columbia Controller's Office.

According to the evidence at trial, in August and September 2001, BOWES provided Jacqueline McTair, a bank officer at Chase, with approximately \$2.5 million in checks that had been received by the Student Financial Services Office for deposit into

Columbia's account. The trial evidence also showed that BOWES did not inform the Controller's Office about the checks, and that McTair cashed some of the checks and used other checks to conceal previously stolen deposits.

The trial evidence demonstrated that, subsequently, on December 3, 2001, BOWES prepared fraudulent deposit tickets and fraudulent internal Columbia documents, which created the false appearance that approximately \$2.5 million dollars had been deposited into Columbia's Chase account, although BOWES knew in fact that there were no checks deposited on that date, as she had provided the checks to McTair months earlier to mask prior thefts from Columbia's account.

The evidence also established that on February 14, 2002, after the embezzlement scheme had been uncovered and McTair had been terminated by Chase, BOWES accessed a Chase safe deposit box that McTair had arranged to open in BOWES' name, and brought the contents of the safe deposit box to McTair in an encounter on 125th Street in Manhattan.

BOWES, 39, lives in Medford, New York.

Mr. COMEY praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in this case.

Assistant United States Attorney MIRIAM BAER is in charge of the prosecution.

03-277

###